DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 315 221 RC 017 277

AUTHOR Chance, Edward W.
TITLE Developing Administrative Vision.
PUB DATE Mar 89
NOTE 13p.; In: Education and the Changing Rural Community: Anticipating the 21st Century. Proceedings of the 1989 ACRES/NRSSC Symposium. See RC 017 257.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Information Analyses (070) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrative Change; Administrative Principles; *Administrator Role; Administrators; *Educational Administration; *Educational Planning; Elementary Secondary Education; Leaders; *Leadership Styles; Long Range Planning; *Management by Objectives; Rural Education

ABSTRACT

Visionary leadership has emerged as a significant characteristic of high performing school administrators. Vision provides a sense of direction for the school and facilitates accomplishment. Administrators must move from authoritarian and managerial modes of operation to proactive leadership, and maintain a focus on the vision through turmoil and change. In developing a personal vision, one needs to ask questions about one's strengths and weaknesses as a leader and write the answers in a vision statement. In much the same manner, one can develop this into an organizational vision, and then identify knowledge of the organization and involve others to facilitate the implementation of the vision. The final component of vision is future vision which often uses metaphorical statements, symbols, or personal models. Administrators should allocate funding, materials, and time to sustain the vision, and apply various administrative strategies to pursue the vision. The changes in rural education demands visionary leadership. This paper contains 20 references. (GGH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED315221

Developing Administrative Vision

Edward W. Chance, Ph.D.
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
College of Education
University of Oklahoma
Norman, Oklahoma 73019

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Edward W. Chance

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Prepared for the
National Rural and Small Schools Consortium
Marck, 1989
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

RC 017277

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Developing Administrative Vision

The decade of the 1980's will long be remembered as a time that brought a semblance of reform to the American educational system. Although it is clear that much of the reform movement has been useful in refocusing the mission of public education in this country it has become obvious that the level of success of any reform depends upon the leadership manifested in schools in this country. Specifically, it can be unequivocally stated that there is a strong correlation between an effective building level administrator and the ability of a school to accomplish its expressed goals and objectives.

Educational studies have long stressed the importance for administrators to possess both long and short term goals, educational objectives, and a well thought out educational philosophy. These have been identified as significant aspects in the research relating to effective leaders and leadership capacities (Sweeney, 1982; Leithwood and Montgomery, 1982; Manasse, 1985; and Russell, Maggarella, White, and Maurer, 1985). Recently there has appeared in the literature a much broader and encompassing concept; that is the notion of vision. Visionary leadership has emerged as a significant characteristic of high performing building administrators (Blumberg and Greenfield, 1980). The U.S. Department of Education publication, Principal Selection Guide (1987), states that "effective school leaders have broad visions that are clear, active, ambitious, and performance oriented" (p. 5). It further indicates that effective administrators "create conditions to help them realize their vision" (p. 6).

As important as vision is to the effectiveness of leadership, it is somehow very elusive. There is no item analysis, no magic formula, and no one book that can recount how vision is formed, activated, or sustained. However, it is true that vision is the force, the dream, towards which effective administrators continually strive in the shaping of their individual schools for success. It is also obvious that rural administrators today when confronted by a multitude of tasks, overwhelming economic restrictions, and increased community concerns must have a strong vision. Vision provides the impetus and power for rural schools to achieve success.

This paper will provide assistance to the current or potential administrator by addressing the following questions: "What is vision?", "Why is it important?", and "How can one further clarify or develop an educational vision?"

What Is Vision?

The literature provides a great many definitions of vision. Some of these definitions are very general while others are much more specific and relate to only one specialized aspect. Manasse (1985) provided a very workable generic definition by describing vision as "the development, transmission, and implementation of a desirable future" (p. 150). Batsis (1987) envisioned vision as more comprehensive than goals and objectives because it allows one to see how these fit into the broader structure of the organization. Hickman and Silva (1984) described vision as "a mental journey from the known to the unknown ... creating the future from a montage of facts, hopes, dreams ... and opportunities" (p. 151). Shieve and Shoenheit (1987) indicated that "a vision is a blueprint of a desired state. It is an image of a preferred condition that we work to achieve in the future" (p. 94). Vision may also deeply impact the organization because "exemplary leaders imagine an exciting ... and focused future for their organizations. ... They have visions of what might be, and they believe they can make it happen" (Kouzes and Posner, 1984, p. 1). In an extensive study of eight highly effective principals, Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) found that those with vision attempt to create an environment where their personal values provide a firm foundation for the school. Manasse (1982) also found that personal values were important. She indicated that effective administrators have a vision of a school that is solidly established and entrenched on publicly articulated values. These values are openly discussed and explained within the educational community. An exhaustive study of leadership behavior by a team of University of Texas researchers (Rutherford, 1985) found that effective administrators could discuss the vision of their school without hesitation and could readily identify both long range and short range goals. Interestingly, this study found that teachers within the school environment were well aware of the administrative vision and could relate it to others. Perhaps, Bennis and Nanus (1985) said it

best when they stated that "vision grabs" and is "compelling" (p. 28).

In a recent synthesis of the literature relating to visionary leadership, Grady and LeSourd (1988) identified five dominant qualities of a leader with vision. They found that leaders with vision are deeply guided and motivated by personal values. They also established that these leaders have an intense commitment to the achievement of goals which they have identified as important for the organization. Additionally, visionary leaders strive to develop a common sense of purpose and direction among all members of their organization. They also found that visionary leaders are organizational innovators. Finally, these leaders consistently project and attest to a future that represents something better.

However one defines vision, it is obvious that truly effective administrators have one. Vision is often highly personal although it conceivably can be shaped a plural parentage of teachers, parents, and students (Murphy, 1988). Vision is a destination albeit there may be many detours and roadblocks before the objective is achieved. Vision is essentially intangible. It can not be touched, felt, or seen but it is essential that it exist. Vision is a sweet dream of the future regardless of organizational or environmental restraints. It provides a sense of direction for the school. A visionary administrator is not afraid of stating, "This is what I believe; this is what the school can accomplish; and this is where we are going to be in one year, five years, and ten years." Vision is a powerful force that guides, cajoles, directs, and facilitates accomplishment.

Why Is It Important?

Schools have functioned, but not always successfully, for the past one hundred years under the precept of the bureaucratic model. This meant that rules, a system to enforce compliance, an explicitly defined structure, and the specialization of tasks and decision-making became the norm. Many administrators traditionally utilized an authorative hierarchical style of leadership (Barth, 1987). Control and order was more important than heretical concepts such as creativity and flexibility. However, given the nature of teacher militancy and demands for active involvement in the daily functioning of the school, as well as an

increased demand by the public for accountability, it should be obvious that the old style of administrative dictat will no longer be acceptable.

Administrators must move from this authoritarian, managerial mode of operation to one of proactive leadership. It is crucial that administrators develop a vision that not only calls for excellence but establishes an environment in which a school may achieve excellence. Administrators must be willing to ask the questions, "What are we doing, is it working for us, can it be done in a better way to accomplish our goals?" and to listen to the answers whether they are good or bad. Administrators who are leaders, and not simply managers, must be able to articulate and strive towards the organization they envision. Sergiovanni (1987) has identified six principles vital to administrators today. These are the principles of cooperation, empowerment, responsibility, accountability, meaningfulness, and ability-authority. It must be understood that this movement towards a new leadership mode does not mean that aspects of the bureaucratic model that coordinate or enhance the organization should be jettisoned. Rather, the excesses and abuses of the bureaucratic model should be eliminated.

An administrator with vision is able to maintain a focus on that vision through any turmoil or change. Rutherford (1985) found that teachers recognize the existence of an administrative vision with the result being that both they and students identify school as a good place. He ascertained that visionary leaders provide meaningful direction to seemingly insignificant daily activities. A vision according to Littky and Fried (1988) helps unify a school and raises the emotional mood of those in the organization. All within the successful organization collegially work together to achieve the vision and believe their contributions are important in achieving the vision (Manasse, 1985).

Vision serves as a guide for the school's administrators, faculty, students, and support staff. It helps set the climate for the school because expectations, goals, and purposes are clear and cogent. Vision attains results and as it does teachers and students are aware of their accomplishments and experience a sense of pride in their involvement.

How to Clarify/Develop a Vision

When one first begins to really think of his/her educational vision it is important to remember that it begins within the individual leader. Vision originates as a personal concept and remains so long after the organization has bought into it. Vision reflects personal values, a personal assessment of the organization, personal views of possibilities, and one's professional values.

In developing a personal vision, one needs to ask the following questions:

What are my five greatest strengths?
What are my five greatest weaknesses?
What are three things I value most in life?
What style of leadership am I most comfortable with?
What are the most important things I want to accomplish in this school?
How would I like to be remembered as an administrator?
What do I want to prove as a leader?

Once these questions are honestly answered, then it is possible to begin to formulate or further clarify one's vision.

The next step is to carefully evaluate one's answers and then begin writing a vision statement for an individual school or district. That vision statement can be personal or organizational and often will reflect universal values such as equity and justice (Shieve and Shoenheit, 1987). As one writes this personal vision statement it must reflect what one wants to accomplish. This statement should not be hampered by the reality of organizational or economic and political restraints. It should reflect what one ideally want to accomplish, what the organization should be in an idealistic sense. The total vision statement should be short and no longer than 50 words. After this visionary statement is written, begin to identify strategies for communicating that vision to the faculty and students. Think of a daily schedule and how one might convey that vision through normal operational activities. This is important because communication facilitates the validation of the vision.

A second component of developing and implementing vision is to establish an organizational one. This is

done in much the same manner as for the personal vision. Some of the questions that can be asked are:

> What are the strengths of this school?
> What are its weaknesses?
> What are external factors that help or hinder the proper functioning of this organization?
> What is the existing relationship between the various components of this organization?
> What are the interpersonal strengths and weaknesses of this organization?

Additional questions that are useful have been identified by Kouzes and Posner (1987) as:

> How would you like to change the world for yourself and your organization?
> If you could invent the future, what future would you invent for yourself and your organization?
> What does your ideal organization look like? (p. 102)

After one has answered these questions, it is then appropriate to identify how the knowledge of the organization can be utilized to facilitate the implementation of the vision statement. This is the time to set priorities of what should and could be accomplished in both the short and long term. This is a good time to begin to involve others in the process of establishing methodology for the implementation of the vision as well as areas of responsibility. The more others are involved at this stage, the more amenable they are to accept responsibility for the successful completion of a specific task. This aspect of vision is not easy and not necessarily tidy. It behooves the administrator to not lose sight of his/her personal vision. It remains the guiding force.

The final component of vision is future vision. Manasse (1985) indicated that "leaders use future vision to focus the attention of their organization on accomplishing the possible rather than maintaining what exists" (p. 158). Future vision often utilizes metaphorical statements, symbols, or personal models. Pronouncements such as "Striving for Excellence", "Excellence and Equity", and "A Time for Greatness" provide impetus and direction for the organization. Future vision reflects the use of creativity and

imagination. It should indicate the ideal school. This provides a target for the organization to strive towards. As the future vision is articulated again, it is crucial that the administrator models effective behaviors towards securing the vision.

Shieve and Shoenheit (1987) identified five distinct steps for the actualization of vision. These are: (1) see it, (2) own it, (3) make this personal vision a public/organizational one, (4) develop strategies to achieve it, and (5) begin acting on the vision (p. 99). The significant aspect is that a vision must be acted upon. Involvement of others, selling the vision through effective communication and utilizing resources wisely all facilitate implementation of the vision.

Sustaining the Vision

Effective administrators allocate funding, materials, and time in pursuit of the vision. They also systematically and judiciously utilize instructional management strategies, advantageous scheduling, and recognition and rewards to maintain the school's focus. These leaders initiate, monitor, motivate, facilitate, and orchestrate to reach the vision. The effective visionary leader is constantly in pursuit of a school climate that enhances learning and advances teacher productivity.

Communication of the vision is crucial. As Rutherford (1985) found, others have to know what the vision is and be able to articulate and publicize it in their own way. That means the vision should be communicated to everyone that will listen - teachers, custodians, bus drivers, students, cooks, parents, and the community at large. People need to hear it, understand in it, and accept it before they can fully support it. The only roadblock to the scope and variety of the communication is the limit of the administrator's imagination. Visionary leaders are "people" oriented. They believe that the vision is important and because they exhibit essential human relation skills others also begin to exhibit these attributes. This contagious reaction is one that moves the school inexorably toward the reality of the vision.

Administrators with vision engage their staff in decision making and problem solving that shape organizational activities, teacher performance, and student behavior and learning. This involvement of the

staff not only builds collegiality but exhibits to all what has been deemed organizationally important (Peterson, 1986). The AASA monograph, Challenges for School Leaders (1988), identified two important aspects that not only facilitate the implementation but assist in sustaining the vision. The first is to periodically free administrators from daily tasks so that a renewal can take place through attendance at meaningful workshops, conferences, or visits to other schools which have been identified as effective. The second suggestion is to allow the administrative staff to spend quality time in the summer for strategic planning. This planning could focus on how far the organization has progressed and how can the school can continue to move towards the fulfillment of the vision in the coming year. If the vision is to be sustained, there must be an opportunity for renewal and an evaluation of programmatic approaches.

Conclusion

This past decade has seen tremendous demands and increased expectations placed on the American educational system. The effective school movement, national reform challenges, and increased claims to traditional authority by faculty and staff have had a profound impact on both urban and rural schools and administrators. Rural administrators must concern themselves not only with these movements but also with declining economic resources, magnified community expectations, outmoded facilities, and shrinking student populations. If these concerns are not enough to overwhelm the typical rural administrator, then add the fact that many rural administrators also teach and serve as counselors or coaches. It is no wonder then that time becomes the most precious commodity to these rural leaders. Now to all of this, these administrators are advised that they must also have a vision.

A recent study by Chance and Lingren (1988) of over five hundred rural principals found that a vast majority considered themselves instructional leaders yet rarely spend time in teachers' classrooms. This study also ascertained that the predominant leadership style of both male and female principals was more concerned with task completion than with individual needs or school climate. When the data was further

analyzed it was concluded that administrators often lack time to accomplish all their goals.

Despite these findings, examples of effective administrators who actively practice instructional leadership serve to illustrate that outstanding administrators do find time to accomplish established goals. These principals believe in effective schools where teachers can instruct and all students can learn. These administrators possess vision. Successful rural administrators are more than officers; they are leaders. Leaders understand that without direction and purpose; programs, facilities, and morale will slowly begin to deteriorate, accelerating as time passes. To prevent this rural administrators must prioritize activities and goals, involve others in decision-making, continue their professional growth, and provide impetus and guidance to the school. They must also, as Barth (1988) states, believe in teachers, attribute much success to them, and not be afraid to admit that an administrator may not know everything and may need assistance. Simply put, the successful, effective administrator must develop, implement, and sustain the vision of not what the school <u>should</u> be but what the school <u>will</u> be. Vision, therefore, should be an administrator's first priority.

Rural schools are a reality of the American public educational system. These schools should never assume they are second class or handicapped because of that ruralness. Instead, with a vision, they can capitalize on and utilize the attributes that ruralness and smallness provides, and they can become great. Vision provides only the destination, but when a visionary leader collaborates with the stakeholders of the school, the trip can be an exciting and rewarding one.

References

American Association of School Administrators. (1988). Challenges for school leaders. Reston, Virginia: Author.

Barth, R.S. (1987). The principal and the profession of teaching. In W. Greenfield (Ed.), Instructional Leadership: Concepts, issues and controversies (pp. 249-270). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Barth, R.S. (1988). Principals, teachers, and school leadership. Phi Delta Kappan, 69 (9), 639-647.

Batsis, T.M. (1987, April). Characteristics of excellent principals. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Catholic Educational Association, New Orleans, LA.

Bennis, W., & Nanus, B. (1985). Leaders: The strategies for taking charge. New York: Harper and Row.

Blumberg, A., & Greenfield, W. (1980). The effective principal: Perspectives on school leadership. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Chance, E.W., & Lingren, C. (1988, September). The great plains rural principal: Characteristics and leadership style. A paper presented at the National Rural Education Association National convention, Bismarck, ND.

Grady, M.L., & LeSourd, S.J. (1988, August). Principals' attitudes toward visionary leadership. A paper presented at the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration National Conference, Kalamazoo, MI.

Hickman, C.R., & Silva, M. (1984). Creating excellence: Managing corporate culture, strategy, and change in the new age. New York: New American Library.

Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B.Z. (1987). The leadership challenge: How to get extraordinary things done in organizations. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Leithwood, K.A., & Montgomery, D.J. (1986). The principal profile. Toronto, Ontario: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Littky, D., & Fried, R. (1988, January). The Challenge to make good school great. NEA Today, pp. 4-8.

Manasse, A.L. (1982, March). Effective principals: Effective at what? Principal, 61 (4), 10-15.

Manasse, A.L. (1985, Fall). Vision and leadership: Paying attention to intention. Peabody Journal of Education, 63 (1), 150-173.

Murphy, J.T. (1988, May). The unheroic side of leadership: Notes from the swamp. Phi Delta Kappan, 69 (9), 654-659.

Peterson, K.D. (1985, Fall). Vision and problem finding in principals' work: Values and cognition in administration. Peabody Journal of Education, 63 (1), 87-106.

Rutherford, W.L. (1985). School principals as effective leaders. Phi Delta Kappan, 67 (1), 31-34.

Sergiovanni, T.J. (1987). The principalship: A reflective practice perspective. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Shieve, L.T., & Shoenheit, M.B. (1987). Vision and the work life of educational leaders. In L.T. Shieve & M.B. Shoenheit (Eds.), Leadership: Examining the elusive (p. 93-104). Washington, D.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Sweeney, J.T. (1982). Research synthesis on effective school leadership. Educational Leadership, 39 (5), 346-352.

U.S. Department of Education. (1987). Principal selection guide. Washington, D.C.: Author.